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Title: Unmet psychosocial needs and their psychological impact in haematological cancer survivors

Date: 2015

Originally published in: Psycho-Oncology

Example citation: Swash, B., Bramwell, R., & Hulbert-Williams, N. (2015). Unmet psychosocial needs and their psychological impact in haematological cancer survivors. *Psycho-Oncology*, 24 (Supp 1), 1-15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/pon.3824>

Version of item: Authors' post-print

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/553072>

Unmet psychosocial needs and their psychological impact in haematological cancer survivors

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BACKGROUND: Unmet psychosocial needs are underexplored in haematological cancer and little is known about how the presence of need may relate to psychological outcomes. The relationship between need and outcome has been recognised but thus far the factors that may explain or moderate this relationship have not been examined. Psychological flexibility may be one such explanatory variable.

METHODS: Haematological cancer survivors were recruited via advertisement circulated by two major UK cancer charities. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their unmet needs (SCNS SF-34), psychological wellbeing (HADS, EORTC QLQ-C30) and psychological flexibility (AAQ-II). Participants were all over the age of 16 and had received a diagnosis of haematological cancer. 95 participants (53% female, average age 62) took part in the study.

RESULTS: Results indicate that both unmet needs and psychological morbidity are prevalent in haematological cancer survivors. Clinically significant levels of anxiety and depression were found in a sub-set of all disease groups. Significant correlations were found between levels of unmet needs and both anxiety and quality of life. Psychological flexibility was found to moderate the relationship between unmet need and distress.

CONCLUSION: Patients with a haematological malignancy have on-going psychosocial care needs and need directly relates to overall psychological wellbeing. Unmet needs assessment therefore has a dual clinical utility: firstly to provide information regarding patient requirement for support; secondly, as an indicator of overall psychological wellbeing. Psychological flexibility was found to moderate the relationship between unmet need and distress; as such interventions that target flexibility may reduce distress.